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Mate Is 'Ham' Radio Operator, Wife Fed Up With His Hobby

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WHAT is the measuring stick for a hobby for a married man? What proportion of time and money should be spent with the hobby? Should it take so much time and money that family life and the budget are jeopardized? Read this complaint:

Mrs. Griggs: I can't restrain myself from writing how I feel about my husband's hobby of amateur radio. He has indulged in this hobby for 11 years, way beyond what I consider normal. He has spent thousands of dollars in equipment and all leisure hours in trying to become a bigger "ham." I am practically widowed by it! The children, except for one boy, see so little of him that they don't ask about him any more. The one son is following in his footsteps, hibernating in the "ham" shack, chatting with fellow "hams" by the hour, using the same lingo.

Oh, yes, they are a sociable lot, these "hams," when talking to fellow "hams." But confronted with any other individual, or when relatives or friends call, they are lost for words except to lead them to the shack and show off the expensive equipment. Visitors soon tire of this and stop calling. The family atmosphere is a morgue atmosphere. Members of our household only assemble together and come to life at meals or bedtime.

To me "ham radio" is a sedentary hobby. My husband gets little sunshine and fresh air, because he confines himself to his shack every moment he gets. I have met many of his "ham" friends and for the most part they are suffering from indigestion, ulcers or nervous disorders, probably due to lack of exercise.

It Takes Money

Present day "ham radio" as seen from our home takes a great deal of money from the family budget. These fellows must have the latest equipment, which comes virtually assembled, or at least with complete instructions for assembling, requiring little mental exercise. Years ago the "hams" built their own sets with their own ideas and derived a great deal of satisfaction from their efforts. Today they are all mimics except for the fact that they try to outdo each other with more and more expensive equipment.

I am determined to discourage my son from continuing the hobby. He is missing all the fun of baseball games, football, basketball and just plain hiking. He has already lost his healthy look for lack of outdoor exercise. His personality has suffered because he seldom comes face to face with people outside of "hams." I say it is a fine hobby for one who is disabled and can't get about, but for a normal, healthy father and son —no sireeee! HAM BONE

Ham Bone: Any hobbyist with family obligations should put family needs first, spending time and money in a way that doesn't jeopardize well-being and security. If your husband isn't doing this he should take time off and think the situation through. But keep in mind it could be worse! Your husband could be interested in "other women." He could hide out from the sun and his family in a drinking place, never coming home sober. He could spend an excessive amount of money on women, liquor and gambling.

Sharing Enthusiasm

You might have a stabilizing influence in connection with his hobby if you made an effort to share some of his enthusiasm. Many wives do this and are happy. If you learned to speak the lingo, shared interest in talking to others around the globe, he might decide to do some things you want to do that would make you happier.

He might see the need to consider the budget more, to influence the boy to indulge in outdoor sports and go with him sometimes. Right now your resentment may cause an emotional block in him, so far as seeing family needs. I. Q. G.